

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
WANDA HOLZWART
Nurse, Army, World War II.

2000

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Holzward, Wanda L., (1923-2002). Oral History Interview, 2000.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Video Recording: 1 videorecording (ca. 40 min.); ½ inch, color.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Wanda L. Holzward, a Waterloo, Wisconsin native, discusses her World War II service as a member of the Army Nurse Cadet Corps serving aboard hospital ships. Holzward discusses her enlistment and military training, which included marching, calisthenics, and training with male doctors, at Camp McCoy (Wisconsin) and Myrtle Beach (South Carolina). She describes the social atmosphere in the military and spending time at the officer's club. After joining the Transportation Corps, Holzward details traveling from South Carolina to California on a Merchant Marine ship. She talks about having a wisdom tooth removed and, because of a fungal infection on her feet, risking a demerit to wear sandals. She mentions passing through the Panama Canal and spending a lot of time waving at sailors on other ships. While stationed in San Francisco, she tells of the nurses working together to cover up another Army nurses' abortion of a pregnancy. Holzward talks about a train ride across the States, begging to be assigned to an Army hospital ship with her friend, and duty aboard the U.S.S. Shamrock, which carried German prisoners of war to France. On the return trip to the States, Holzward describes transporting American soldiers who had been injured outside of combat or who were awaiting court martial. She mentions fraternizing with enlisted personnel and having shipboard dances and volleyball matches. Reassigned to the S.S. Washington, she talks about five trips transporting English war brides and caring for their babies. She comments on the anger of the English women when there were no nylon stockings available on the ship, and she tells of the ship's captain having a crush on one of the war brides. After being discharged, Holzward discusses using the GI Bill to take an art course, readjusting to civilian life, getting a job at Wood Veterans Hospital in Milwaukee, and marrying a veteran she met there. She recalls being in a bad storm during one of the ocean crossings and compares the good behavior of the German prisoners they transported to that of the American soldiers. She tells of her friend aboard the hospital ship falling in love with a lab technician and seeing them get married after they were discharged. Holzward describes sightseeing in Europe, the food and living quarters on the ship, sneaking alcohol aboard, and having pleasant interactions with Japanese prisoners of war at Camp Kilmer.

Biographical Sketch:

Holzward (1923-2002) served for eighteen months as a nurse during and after World War II. After being discharged at the rank of 2nd lieutenant, she worked for a time at Wood Veterans Hospital (Milwaukee), had two children, moved to Madison where she worked at the VA hospital and at Madison General Hospital, and eventually settled in Princeton (Wisconsin).

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000
Transcribed by Liliana Gundy, 2010
Checked and corrected by John C. Pike, 2011
Corrections typed in by Angelica Engel, 2011
Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2011

Interview Transcript:

- James: Okay, talking to Wanda Holzwart. When were you born?
- Wanda: I was born February 20, 1923.
- James: Where?
- Wanda: In Waterloo, Wisconsin.
- James: And when did you get in the military service?
- Wanda: I got in probably in 1942, I think.
- James: Yeah, and how did that go about? Were you in one of those training nursing [unintelligible] programs?
- Wanda: I was. Right.
- James: My recollection was that you were.
- Wanda: Right. The last—
- James: And how'd that work?
- Wanda: The last six months of my training, the Cadet Corps came about.
- James: Did they offer this to—
- Wanda: They offered this to the nurses.
- James: Where were you then?
- Wanda: At Madison General.
- James: Oh, okay.
- Wanda: And so—
- James: What was the offer, specifically?
- Wanda: The offer was that if you joined this Corps, then your last six months of training you could even go to a different hospital for some training and then—but you had to join the Army.
- James: Did they say for how long? Or no?

Wanda: They didn't say for how long, but you had to join the Army. We had neat little uniforms, little cadet nurse—

James: Did they pay you, too? They must have paid you.

Wanda: Oh, I think they paid. Right, I don't remember that, but yes, they must have, right.

James: Monthly stipend of some kind.

Wanda: Yes, right.

James: And you got uniforms.

Wanda: Got uniforms and—

James: Were there any meetings to go to? There must have been something.

Wanda: No meetings, nope.

James: You mean you had a uniform but just didn't really do anything military at all?

Wanda: No, nothing military at all.

James: Didn't get any books to study or anything?

Wanda: No books to study. It's just that you needed to join the Army. And then my last six months was when I could have gone some place else. I was going to Wood Hospital in Chicago, but I was so anemic that they wouldn't take me. And so I spent my last six months up in surgery at—not Madison General. I wasn't there. I was at Milwaukee at Deaconess [Hospital].

James: Deaconess?

Wanda: Deaconess, right.

James: That's where you took your training?

Wanda: That's where I took my training.

James: At Deaconess in Milwaukee.

Wanda: Right.

James: Okay, but you stayed in the Army?

Wanda: Right, I joined the Army after I got out of training.

James: Right, then where did they send you?

Wanda: Well, we went to Camp McCoy [Camp McCoy, now named Fort McCoy, is the oldest active US Army installation in Wisconsin] and had a—

James: What went on there? I mean, what was—

Wanda: Well, we actually, you know, were regular training. There was a hospital there, but I mean mostly Army training.

James: Like what? What did they ask you to do?

Wanda: Like marching. Calisthenics. We had to get out every morning and do those. The doctors were also up there being trained. They were the worst marchers in the world and they said, “Doctors do not make good soldiers,” because they couldn’t march. We took damn long hikes, I mean, that half of us just didn’t make it. Didn’t want to. I mean, it was dumb, you know.

James: How big a group were you?

Wanda: Um, jeez.

James: I mean roughly.

Wanda: Yeah.

James: You know, one hundred or—?

Wanda: About one hundred.

James: Uh-huh.

Wanda: And I went with a friend of mine that I graduated with.

James: And you’re all on the same status of just finishing nurse instruction?

Wanda: Right, right.

James: Ok, were you commissioned by then or no?

Wanda: Yeah, we were commissioned 2nd Lieutenant as soon as we went in.

- James: 2nd Lieutenant? And did they tell you about what was going to happen after you were at McCoy or did you know or—?
- Wanda: We didn't know at all and I don't think anybody even asked. We did do some nursing out there. We had—they had just that kind of thing. But we were on duty for 12 hours. It was 7-7 shifts and—but it was just like the guys, and there was no heavy nursing but there were long hours. We were just there, I think, for about three months.
- James: And then what?
- Wanda: Then we went to—see, I should have had all this put down for you. But I didn't because I didn't even think about it anymore. It's just that I had such fun for 18 months. That's all I remember. No war, just fun. Then we went to one of the Carolinas, wherever Myrtle Beach is.
- James: South Carolina.
- Wanda: South Carolina, and then we were in a camp down there and doing pretty much the same thing, training, for I don't know what. Just Army stuff. I mean—
- James: Not nursing stuff?
- Wanda: Not nursing at all. We were all supposed to know how to nurse, so we—
- James: You didn't have any manuals or anything like that about how the nurses were supposed to behave in the Army?
- Wanda: Probably. But, I mean, I don't remember. We never did any studying or anything like that, just playing.
- James: You had plenty of time off then.
- Wanda: We had lots of time off, right.
- James: Did you spend the time in the bars and the ballrooms?
- Wanda: In the officers' clubs [laughs].
- James: Officers' club. Was that a wild and crazy place?
- Wanda: That was a wild and crazy place. They had terrible drinks. They served—
- James: Oh, really?

Wanda: —wood alcohol with grapefruit juice, and you were really bombed from that. I mean, I didn't do too much of that. I think we mostly just played. We didn't do anything there as far as work, you know, other than our daily calisthenics that they make you do. Then where did we go? Then we got on a ship, I know. I joined the transportation. We were all put in a big room and they called out different things that you might want to join and my friend and I picked the Transportation Corps. And so we were put—we were going to the Philippines. MacArthur needed nurses in the Philippines, so we were put on a ship—

James: Where?

Wanda: —out of South Carolina. We got on some kind of a—what were those guys called?

James: Transport ships of some kind?

Wanda: They transport the—

James: [Unintelligible] ships?

Wanda: Merchant Marine.

James: Merchant Marine?

Wanda: They were the ones that took us over. And it was a very bad trip.

James: You went down through the canal?

Wanda: We went down through the Panama Canal. And the food was terrible. All we really ate were oranges because they had skins on and—

James: You didn't like the food aboard the ship?

Wanda: Oh, it was dirty! The guys would bring out the bread under their arms with no wrappers on and whatnot, so we didn't really eat much there. And we played one hell of a lot of pinochle, but you had to get up early in the morning to get a card table, see, because they didn't have many card tables. So we'd take turns getting up to get our card table. So that's what we did. On the way out, one of the girls had a bad tooth. A dentist, a new dentist, one of their trainees too, pulled her tooth and broke her jaw.

James: Jesus.

Wanda: Broke her jaw [laughs].

- James: With a wisdom tooth—the extractions—the jaw is very thin there.
- Wanda: I had one out up in Camp McCoy and I was in bed to two days. I had a dry socket out of it. I was bleeding. It was just terrible. In fact, while they were pulling it, it hurt so damn much that I finally—I just took everything out of my mouth and I laid it all on the table. “I just have to cry,” and I did, so they brought me some phenobarb, of course, and calmed me down. But, anyway, on the ship, I had some kind of fungus on my feet so I was just wearing sandals. Well, every day, this guard would come around and tell me I would get a demerit because I had sandals on instead of my Army shoes, you know, but I didn’t care. None of us really cared. We weren’t afraid of those Army people. We got to San Francisco and MacArthur decided he didn’t need us and so we stayed. We had a real good time out there for a couple of weeks.
- James: How big of a group were you now?
- Wanda: We were, um, I don’t even know. Probably one hundred or so.
- James: Nurses only?
- Wanda: Nurses only, right.
- James: No other hospital people?
- Wanda: No, no. We didn’t even see them until we got on the ship. Oh, and we had traveled—that’s right. I forgot about that trip. I should have written this down. We had a nice—oh no. Okay, this trip was later. It was from San Francisco. We actually took the boat through the [Panama] Canal and that was fun and I wish I’d paid more attention, but we were too busy waving to the boys in the ship that was behind us, because we were young and liked men. And so we got to San Francisco and we were put in barracks there and we were given all this crap.
- James: What part of San Francisco were you in. Do you know?
- Wanda: I think we were almost right in.
- James: Oh, I see.
- Wanda: Right in the port there and—while they decided what to do with us, you know. So then they decided they—
- James: Do you recall about when this time was that you were in San Francisco? Was that about a year after you got in?

- Wanda: I was only in for 18 months, so I did a lot of things in 18—
- James: It could have been in '43 then?
- Wanda: Could have been in '43, right. And, let's see, how did that work then? We had fun in San Francisco. In fact, one of our nurses got pregnant and we had to find—is this all going to go someplace?
- James: Go someplace?
- Wanda: Is anybody going to know this [laughs]?
- James: Well, [unintelligible].
- Wanda: Oh, you don't know her name anyway.
- James: No, I don't. Don't give me her name.
- Wanda: She got pregnant, and so we had to find someplace for her to have an abortion. Which she did, because it was one of the Army guys, you know. And so she had that and then she couldn't come with us. I mean, she had to stay and recuperate, because we were put—this is when we were put in a big building and they called out different places and they called out “transportation.” That's when I joined the Transportation Corps.
- James: Did they kick her out of the service? She wasn't—
- Wanda: No, no, no, and they didn't know it. I mean, we covered that up. Probably they would have, even though they should have kicked the guy out rather than her. And so then we just got on a train and we were going to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, all the way from back—I mean, we had just come from that coast. And they put us on a train and Ione and I were late saying goodbye to everybody, so we got on late and all of our little berths were taken. But I opened up this door and here is a regular room, so we had a regular little state room on the train all the way back to Camp Kilmer, all the way to the other coast.
- James: Who's Ione?
- Wanda: Ione was one of my friends that I went in the Army Service with. She was from Deaconess too.
- James: So what were they going to do with you? Did you know?

- Wanda: So we didn't know what they were going to do. Then we were put in a barracks there and whatnot and fooled around there for awhile. And then there was a hospital ship that was going to leave, and they picked Ione to go and not me. Now this was the first we'd have been split up and we went in together, you know—
- James: Sure.
- Wanda: —and so I went to the chief nurse and cried and whined and whatnot. And she said it just was too bad, so I went to the—I couldn't find my—
- James: You went a little higher?
- Wanda: I went a little higher, to God [laughs].
- James: Padre?
- Wanda: Yes, but I couldn't find my minister, so I went to the Catholic minister. And I'm telling him this sad story and he said, "Well let me see if I can do anything about it." So the next thing I heard was the chief nurse calling me in. When I'd gone then, I saw him standing outside her door with my name and whatnot in his hand, and so she called me in and said, "Well, with all your fussing and whining [laughs] you're going to get to go." She was mad at me. So then I got to go on this ship.
- James: What was the name of the ship?
- Wanda: The ship was the SS—it was a hospital ship. We were actually taking German prisoners back to Cherbourg, France.
- James: How much of the war was over?
- Wanda: The war was over. The war was over actually about three months after I was in, because I joined up in February and the war was over in June. So we had actually D-Day or J-Day or whatever day it was in Myrtle Beach. It was a wild time, of course, and I wish I had kept a diary. It would have been fun. I should have at least sat down and tried to think of some of this before I came to you.
- James: Hospital ship—
- Wanda: Hospital ship—
- James: Did the Army offer a ship?
- Wanda: The Shamrock. It was called the Shamrock. Hey, thanks.

James: Was that an Army hospital ship or Navy?

Wanda: That was an Army hospital ship, yeah, and these guys, the German prisoners, were very, very nice guys. And they were constantly helping us. They would shine up the kitchens and I said, “You know, they are really, they’re nice guys. They’re just like our guys.”

James: Right.

Wanda: Some guy told them they had to fight a war and they’re out fighting a war, you know. And so somebody said—

James: Other than this, what was your specific duty on that?

Wanda: I just—to take care of anybody—

James: Like a sore throat?

Wanda: Sore throat. I mean, it was very light.

James: Did you have a dispensary of some kind on the boat?

Wanda: We had a dispensary. We had a—

James: Who were you running the hospital ship for?

Wanda: Well, it was a hospital ship.

James: Did you have an operating room?

Wanda: Yeah, we had an operating room and everything, but we never had to use it because they were pretty healthy guys. It was just mostly an aspirin or something, you know, and so then we took them—somebody said, “Oh, well, they’re being nicer—bucking for their citizenship papers.” And so we took them to Cherbourg and dropped them off and then we brought a load of our own guys back. Now we had two wounded—not one—this is what my memory is of this. Not one of them was a battle casualty. They were (I hate to say this) but they were ugly Americans. But you don’t have to write that down. But they really were. We had two wards that were under lock and key that were going back for court martials for doing bad things. The other wounded ones were like jeep accidents, beer bottle accidents. I mean, there were no war casualties on that ship at all, which was really kind of sad. And so we took them back to New York and they were dropped off there. Then we went back to Camp Kilmer and waited for our next assignment, which was bringing back English war brides.

James: Well we've got a lot of space on the tape.

Wanda: Oh! [Laughs]. Yeah, for 18 months, I was a lot of places.

James: We're going back on all this stuff, but I want to get it down first.

Wanda: Alright, and that was the S.S. Washington, that ship, because that's since been destroyed.

James: That was a—just S.S.? That wasn't a Navy ship?

Wanda: S.S., no. That was a—

James: That was a Merchant Marine or—

Wanda: It was a commercial ship that they used.

James: Okay.

Wanda: So we had class "A" state rooms and had wonderful meals and even had a captain's dinner and it was—

James: You were treated like queens.

Wanda: Oh, we were treated like queens.

James: How many nurses were aboard this?

Wanda: There were about 30 of us, I think, and we had our head chief nurse.

James: Oh, you just had a wonderful time.

Wanda: Oh god, we had a wonderful time with the doctors and [laughs] we were not supposed to—

James: Fraternize.

Wanda: —fraternize with the, uh—

James: Enlisted personnel.

Wanda: —enlisted, right. But we had three guys, Tom, Dick and Harry, that were our communication guys, or something, and they were really nice. They gave me a birthday card. It was my birthday when I was on the ship. We had dances, we had volleyball, and we just played—

- James: You always did—
- Wanda: On the way over, see. We didn't have—we were just passengers on the way over.
- James: Oh, your ship was empty.
- Wanda: Our ship was empty. They took some regular passengers over and dropped them off in Ireland, and we drove by—we sailed by Ireland, and they dropped these passengers off. And we'd had—Iona and I were in charge of the hospital. We'd stock up the whole hospital on there and we took care of that. And the only patient we had on the way over—some passenger cut her finger or something.
- James: But then you brought back English war brides?
- Wanda: Then we brought back English war brides, and they were loaded on in, oh god, it started with a "B." A town in England, in England.
- James: Birmingham? No, that's not on the coast. Bristol? Brighton?
- Wanda: It might come to me. But we loaded them on and they all had to be checked out by a doctor. And a lot of them had babies and so they brought their babies. And then we made all their formulas, for the babies.
- James: Oh my.
- Wanda: And they were not happy with that, because they got one of three kinds. I mean, they did not get their special formulas. They were also mad that we didn't have nylon stockings for them. Now we were wearing rayons ourselves.
- James: Where would they go aboard ship? My goodness.
- Wanda: Right. Oh, but they expected all of this stuff that they were probably told by their husbands.
- James: That's how they got pregnant, accepting those lies [laughs].
- Wanda: [Laughs]. That's right. Right.
- James: It was a trade-off [laughs].
- Wanda: [Laughs] It was a trade-off, right. And so then on the way back, then we worked. I mean, we took care of making the formulas. We had a lot of

kids to fuss with. We lost two babies. Died on the ship. They shouldn't have been let on. They were sick and they should have been scanned but they weren't. And so we had them. And then we had two wonderful doctors that were just great and took care of all that. And we made—did this five times.

James: You did five war bride trips?

Wanda: Five war bride trips. That took up a lot of my Army time.

James: Oh my goodness! It must have been well into 1946 by this time.

Wanda: Right.

James: Yes.

Wanda: I can't even remember when I got out. I was only in 18 months.

James: '43 to '45 and one-half.

Wanda: When did the war end?

James: '45.

Wanda: '45?

James: In August.

Wanda: So then I probably didn't get in the whole war. When was V-J Day or V—

James: 19th of August 1945.

Wanda: Oh, that was '45? Then I probably didn't get in right away when I thought I did. That's right, I graduated from high school in '40, so then I went a year to the university, and then I went three years to nursing. So I didn't get in, then, until—

James: You probably didn't [unintelligible].

Wanda: I had three, right—

James: The nurses up there—the corps. That you started in '43. And then you started active duty probably in '44.

Wanda: Right.

James: And then '45 to '46. You must have gone past the end of the war, doing this stuff.

Wanda: Right.

James: Okay. Alright, we can get it. Five trips?

Wanda: Five trips. And on this one, the first trip, we brought a real beautiful girl back that had married some American, and the captain of our ship had a real crush on her. And Ione and I were the bridge players on the ship, so he would invite us to his cabin to play bridge, and she was always there. She only stayed in America for, like, two weeks. She must have met her husband and—

James: And decided the captain was better?

Wanda: The captain was better [laughs]. And, I don't know, maybe the captain got rid of his wife. There were a lot of shenanigans going on.

James: I'd expect.

Wanda: And so we took her back. She went back as a passenger on the next ship. But we did that five times and that was about it. I mean, I was about done—

James: So then what did you do after that? After—

Wanda: After that, we were in—

James: When you got out of the Service?

Wanda: Yes, I got out of the Service, right.

James: Did you use your G.I. Bill?

Wanda: I used my G.I. Bill just to take an art course, here in Madison.

James: You didn't go back to college or anything?

Wanda: No, no, because I already was a nurse.

James: Yes, I understand.

Wanda: And then I, I think, I stayed home. I was real lost when I get out of the Army. Real—you know, I'd been taken care of for so long.

James: You're not used to making any decisions.

Wanda: No, no, and so I was pretty sad. And I kind of made my parents miserable because I decided to redo their whole house. And I finally went and got a job at Wood.

James: At Wood?

Wanda: At Wood.

James: At the VA hospital?

Wanda: At the VA, right, and that's where I met Frosty, as a patient, and married him.

James: Ah-ha.

Wanda: So that was my whole Army experience.

James: And so then after that you were at Wood for how long?

Wanda: I was at Wood for about three or four years, because then I get pregnant right after I got married, and so I took care of babies.

James: You have how many kids?

Wanda: Two.

James: Two children.

Wanda: Yes.

James: And when did you move to this area?

Wanda: We moved to this area—that's right, Frosty was working at the VA, at Wood, and then he got the job at the VA here in Madison, and so we moved—

James: Right, so you moved to Madison General to work?

Wanda: I went to the university first and worked there two nights a week, 5:30 to 11 or something. And then I quit there and I worked for Dr. Wassaberger as he was writing a book. Did you know him?

James: Uh-huh. It used to be a pleasure working with him.

- Wanda: Oh, did you? That's right, that's right, yeah. And I worked for him for a couple of years, writing his book, right. I worked up in the VA. Actually, I was in Frosty's office, so I had my desk in there. And that was a fun thing to do.
- James: Sure.
- Wanda: And then I went after that—then I started at Madison General, and I was there for the rest of my—
- James: You finished your career there.
- Wanda: Right, right.
- James: Ok, now, going back, what was the hospital, your training corps, what was that called?
- Wanda: It was just called the Nurse Cadet Corps.
- James: Nurse Cadet Corps, Nurse Cadet Corps.
- Wanda: Yes.
- James: That's the word I couldn't think of, Cadet Corps. Okay. Did you have any trouble when you were at sea? Did you tolerate it or did you get seasick?
- Wanda: I tolerated that fine, except that we had one bad storm one night where they had to strap us in our beds and the ship was listing. It could only list something like 42 degrees and we were listing 41, and the stewards had tied everything down and we had ourselves lashed in the bed. That was very scary, because you never knew if you were coming back up. On that one ship, the Merchant Marine ship, where the guy, the dentist, broke [the woman's jaw], there were a lot of seasick girls that were just throwing up all the time and there was nobody to really look after them.
- James: They weren't doing IVs in those days.
- Wanda: They weren't doing IVs, right.
- James: So they couldn't compensate for that at all.
- Wanda: Right, right. I mean, she just—she was very sick. In fact, I think they put her in the hospital when we got discharged.
- James: They took her off.

Wanda: Right.

James: Did you get promoted?

Wanda: I didn't stay in long enough. You had to stay in long enough to get to be 1st Lieutenant.

James: Oh, I see. Okay.

Wanda: Yeah.

James: Let's go back and tell me about these German prisoners of war. How did you communicate with them? Or did they speak English pretty well by that time?

Wanda: Some of them spoke English, but we had no trouble communicating with them at all because we didn't have to talk to them too much.

James: But they didn't have to do anything either.

Wanda: And they didn't have to do anything, but they were always offering to help us do things, like, you know, when we were cleaning things and whatnot they were always helping. They were really nice guys.

James: Certainly. They were just like us.

Wanda: Yes.

James: And nothing happened otherwise on that cruise. The prisoners got there. No problem with them?

Wanda: There was no problem, no, because they were locked right in there—

James: Oh, they were locked?

Wanda: They were—it was a locked—the two wards were locked wards. They were going back with good guards because they were going back for court martial, and I don't even know some of the stuff—

James: This was the Germans going back for court martial?

Wanda: No, no, our guys coming back, that we were bringing back. No, the Germans were all [**End of side 1**] great. They were—

James: They were loose around the ship then. They weren't put anyplace.

Wanda: No, they were just loose.

James: Okay, now, then when you came back, you came back with wounded men who were wounded under different circumstances? Not in the line of duty.

Wanda: Right.

James: They were shot and [unintelligible] and—

Wanda: Bottle, jeep accidents—

James: And they were kept under locked guard?

Wanda: Not all of them, just two wards. The rest were—they were loose and they were—

James: Not very nice.

Wanda: No, we liked the Germans better.

James: Oh, I'm sure. A different type of person, I'd say.

Wanda: Yes, they were. They were real gentlemen.

James: Yes. They had to be gentlemen. Did they try to steal things?

Wanda: Nope. Do you mean our guys?

James: Yes.

Wanda: I don't think so. We really didn't have anything to steal.

James: You didn't have any real problems, then?

Wanda: No, we didn't have any real problems.

James: Right, so you didn't have to take care of them. There was no treatment involved with them?

Wanda: No, no, no.

James: But the wounded must have had some type of—

Wanda: Well, none of them were really wounded, the Germans that I remember.

James: I don't mean the Germans. These Americans—

Wanda: Americans. Oh yes, we had to, you know, bandage them or whatever was needed. And they weren't that bad. I mean, not like real wounded.

James: There were no hospital cases—

Wanda: No, no. But we were on a hospital ship when we brought them back.

James: How was the food?

Wanda: The food was pretty good. The food on the S.S. Washington was just *wonderful*.

James: Now that's different story, there.

Wanda: And the food—I hardly remember the food on the Army ship. We weren't into food [laughs]. You know [laughs]!

James: I bet. But there wasn't too much fraternization on that ship, was there?

Wanda: Ah, no, although my friend Ione married the lab technician from the hospital ship.

James: The Shamrock?

Wanda: The Shamrock, yes.

James: No kidding.

Wanda: Yes.

James: How'd they get together?

Wanda: Sneakily.

James: I mean after the war or—

Wanda: After the war, right. We were in New Jersey and of course he was on this ship, and they had fallen for each other on the ship.

James: Oh.

Wanda: And, in fact, I stood up for them at their wedding. And this officer was supposed to stand up with me but then when we got to the city hall where they were going to be married, this other guy happened to mention he was

Catholic, and so they couldn't use him. So I was the only one that stood up for them when they were married.

James: Ah.

Wanda: And then Ione found out that he was—he's a big liar. He was a neat guy that she married, but he was like five years younger than she was. He said that he was—had gone to medical school. That was all a lie. But do you know that she put him through medical school! After they were married, by god, if he said he was a doctor, he was going to be one.

James: Where did he go?

Wanda: And she worked and had six kids. They were out west some place.

James: Do you still keep in contact with her?

Wanda: No, they were in Washington. I still keep in contact with her. He died of prostate cancer. He was a radiologist then.

James: Six children, wow.

Wanda: Six kids and put him through doctor school.

James: Now, then, on the Washington—you had more fun on the Washington, did you?

Wanda: We were able to go on little trips in England, and we went to see castles. And Ione and I always went with the doctors and the chaplain. They were our friends, the chaplain and the two doctors.

James: Did they get drunk with you, too?

Wanda: Ah, yes, and he was a great guy.

James: Did he hold his sacred vows?

Wanda: He did [laughs].

James: He did [laughs]. The rest must have been something else.

Wanda: The rest of us were something else, again.

James: Now that sounds fun.

Wanda: It was fun.

- James: You had, what, about two or three weeks between voyages?
- Wanda: Right, right. So in New York—then we were able to do things in New York, and the one trip I didn't get to go to was London, because one of the W.A.C.s had the measles and somebody had to stay with her. We drew straws, and I drew the *damn* straw. I lost and so I didn't get to go to London.
- James: You said the food was pretty good on the Washington?
- Wanda: Very good.
- James: Plus you had a state room all to yourself?
- Wanda: State room. We shared it. Ione and I had that state room. But beautiful state rooms. They had a piano and I could play the piano, practice my piano, and I played volleyball. It was a nice trip.
- James: That trip, parties in the state room?
- Wanda: Cocktail parties, right.
- James: But there was no booze, supposedly, on board, you had to sneak that aboard?
- Wanda: Ah, yes. But everybody had it.
- James: No one was paying much attention then, I suppose.
- Wanda: No, nobody paid—there weren't many rules.
- James: No rules?
- Wanda: No.
- James: The captain and the crew didn't pay much attention to it?
- Wanda: No, no.
- James: Well, then, you must have had a glorious time.
- Wanda: We had a glorious time. That's terrible to say, "I was in World War II and I had just a wonderful time" [laughs].
- James: I'm surprised you didn't end up marrying one of those guys.

Wanda: Oh, I almost did.

James: Did you?

Wanda: Yes, right, but I'm pretty fickle, you know, so it never lasted very long.

James: Oh, I see. You ever keep in contact with other recruits, other than—

Wanda: Gosh, I just haven't. I used to, for a while, yes. With the one doctor that—no, he was—that's right. Oh, god, there were so many, so many [laughs].

James: So many times—

Wanda: So long a time, only 18 months [laughs].

James: A lot of work to do in 18 months [laughs].

Wanda: It was a fun time, though.

James: I bet. It was a real interesting experience.

Wanda: Yes, I wouldn't have missed it, I mean, for anything. It's probably the most fun, in one clump, that I had—

James: That you'll ever have.

Wanda: —that I'll ever have.

James: Yeah, I'm sure of that.

Wanda: Right, yeah.

James: That's not uncommon.

Wanda: And I hate war so bad. I mean, I'm so anti-war, but I was real patriotic there, you know, for that war.

James: Yeah, everybody was.

Wanda: Yeah? Right. There hasn't been one since that I'm—

James: Thrilled about?

Wanda: Thrilled about.

James: I don't think anybody was really thrilled about being in Korea either.

Wanda: Were you in Korea?

James: I was there a year.

Wanda: Oh you were? How come you got stuck over there?

James: It was part of my training in med school. The Navy paid for it.

Wanda: Oh.

James: The Korean War started around that time there. I had to go back in for another two years.

Wanda: Jeez! And you were married then?

James: I had two children. That was a tough time, being away from them. Well, okay—

Wanda: So that's about it.

James: That's a great career. Did they give you any medals?

Wanda: Um, I probably got an overseas one. I didn't get any thing for—

James: Sorry, Madame, everybody got those.

Wanda: Yeah, I think that's how I got it, right. I didn't save any lives or do anything—

James: You don't save lives with medals. You can do other things you know.

Wanda: [Laughs] like what?

James: You can work hard in certain difficult situations that you get medals for.

Wanda: See, we didn't have any. We never had any difficult situations. The one when I was in—I don't know if it was Camp Kilmer. We did have some Japanese prisoners there, and we did have to take care of a ward of—but they, too, were absolutely delightful. I mean, I'd come on duty in the morning and they'd have my whole breakfast ready. They'd have practically all my work done. They were just really nice.

James: The Japanese prisoners?

Wanda: The Japanese prisoners.

James: Oh my.

Wanda: Yeah, which was surprising, you know.

James: The Japanese are like that if you're not fighting them. They're so subservient you don't believe it.

Wanda: Right.

James: They're like night and day, and the Germans, too. That's what Churchill said, "The Germans were either at your feet or at your throat," one way or another, nothing in between. Okay?

Wanda: Okay, that's it.

James: That should do it.

Wanda: Alright.

James: Thank you. Appreciate it.

[End of interview]